

## Eat *More*, Not Less

**D**uring the holidays, we typically hear a great deal about what *not* to eat. Regardless of the season, many of us have come to equate good nutrition with eating less. Today's nutrition experts, however, are sending a different message: Eat *more*, but eat more of the right things.

Why? Because attempting to restrict your daily diet too rigidly can mean eating an inadequate variety of foods, resulting in an insufficient caloric or nutrient intake. Less consumption may even cause a backlash: defiant overeating of high-fat and sugary food choices. Fortifying your diet with health-conscious choices can have the opposite effect, notably reducing your interest in empty calories by filling you up and fully satisfying your nutritional needs.

### Add Function to Your Food

Adding "functional foods" (also called "nutraceuticals" or "designer foods") to your diet can provide benefits beyond basic nutrition, such as prevention against heart disease and cancer. Nutrition consultant Susan Kundrat, MS, RD, LD, notes that functional foods can be plant- or animal-based or engineered in a laboratory setting. Keep in mind, however, that research in this area is emerging rapidly. Many results are not yet conclusive, and individual responses to nutrients can vary. For now, Kundrat advises eating a wide variety of foods, particularly those with known functional benefits.

### Add Healthful Items to Your Diet

Want to feel healthier during the holidays? Make a serious effort to

include healthful food items in your diet each week. Avoid adding too much at once, though, since this time of year can be overwhelming enough. Instead, gradually make dietary changes by planning ahead. Add new items to your shopping list, meals and snacks. When possible, stock healthy foods in your car, next to your computer or in other handy spots. In short, spend less time thinking about what you *will not* eat and more time planning what you *will* eat.

Following is a list of foods you may want to increase in your diet, along with details on their reported health benefits:

- 1 Water.** Daniel Kosich, PhD, in his book *GET REAL: A Personal Guide to Real-Life Weight Management*, confirms that water is an extremely important nutrient. Our bodies are not designed to alert us when we need water, so we cannot depend on thirst alone to guide us. We need between six and eight glasses of water—at least eight ounces each—per day when we are less active, more when we are active.
- 2 Citrus Fruits; Berries; Green, Leafy Vegetables.** All of these are good sources of vitamin C, an important antioxidant believed to boost the immune system, aid in the absorption of iron, improve cholesterol balance and help lower high blood pressure.
- 3 Nuts, Seeds, Wheat Germ.** These provide vitamin E, another essential antioxidant shown to promote heart health, prevent cancer and provide numerous other benefits.

**4 Beans, Whole-Grain Breads and Cereals.** These are a few of the food items that provide fiber. Most of us do not get enough fiber (20 to 35 grams each day) in our diets. Work at getting your quota by consistently planning high-fiber meal choices.

**5 Garlic, Onions, Leeks, Chives.** These are good sources of allyl sulfides, which, among other benefits, may reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease.

**6 Soy Products.** Isoflavones in soy foods may lower blood cholesterol and reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease and osteoporosis.

**7 Honey, Bananas, Tomatoes, Barley, Rye.** Phytochemicals called "fructooligosaccharides" in these foods may improve digestion, help calcium absorption, lower blood cholesterol and reduce osteoporosis risk.

**8 Purple Grape Juice, Red Wine, Green and Black Tea.** These are sources of flavonoids, which are believed to reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease.

**9 Flaxseed, Canola and Soybean Oil.** The alpha-linolenic acid in these products may reduce hypertension and inflammation, as well as improve the immune system.

**10 Cabbage, Kale, Brussels Sprouts, Cauliflower, Broccoli.** These foods contain indoles and isothiocyanates, which may reduce your risk of colon, stomach, lung and rectal cancer.

